

# UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

*a guide to disability basics*



Prepared by Sangai Hami in association with Australian Aid

## About Sangai Hama

Sangai Hama is a nonprofit organization established with the main motive of bringing persons with and without disability together in various developmental activities. It is a non-governmental organization legally registered with District Administration Office, Kathmandu and Social Welfare Council of Nepal Government. The name “Sangai Hama” is composed of two Nepali words “sangai” and “hama” which means “together” and “we” respectively.



Fig: Group picture of Sangai Hama Team

Sangai Hama is governed by its founding board-members who have come together from various walks of life but share the same vision of an inclusive society for people of all abilities. Majority of our board members are persons with disability themselves. We also have some members who do not have a disability but have experience and expertise in understanding disability.

Sangai Hama has very clear goals- working towards an inclusive society where everybody, be disabled or not, will have similar opportunities and challenges. Our vision is to create such an environment in our country where

no one is deprived of education and/or employment opportunities solely based on their disability.

At present, there are hundreds of problems for persons with disability in Nepal. These range from having no representation and access to policies and programs to as basic as lack of handicap-accessible public toilets. If we try to bridge between today and the day in far-future where we reach our goal of inclusion, we lack a very basic but important component- involvement of people without disabilities in disability issues. Sangai Hami will work towards this component by bringing persons with and without disabilities together in various developmental activities.

### Disability

Disability in general is the condition in which a person cannot perform normal day to day activities like walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, understanding, thinking etc .

According to the Nepal Government 2006, “Disability is the condition of difficulty in carrying out daily activities normally and in taking part in social life due to problems in parts of the body and the physical system as well as obstacles created by physical, social, cultural environment and by communication.”

According to World Health Organization (WHO), “Disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, and activity limitations and participations restrictions. An impairment is problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations.”

Therefore, Disability the interaction between barriers and impairments

### Causes of Disability

Most of the disabilities are inherited, ie genetically transmitted. Some of them are congenital, meaning caused by a mother's infection or other disease during pregnancy, embryonic or fetal developmental irregularities, or by injury during or soon after birth. Some kinds of disabilities are acquired such as conditions caused by illness or injury, accidents, stroke, cancer. Still some kind of disabilities are found to be of unknown origin.

### Types of Disabilities

#### ***1. Physical Disability:***

If person has problem in operation of physical parts, use and movement in a person due to problems in nerves, muscles and composition and operation activities of bones and joints, then he/she is said to have physical dis-

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ability.. For example: polio, cerebral palsy, absence of a body part, effect of leprosy, muscular dystrophy, spinal cord injury, club feet, rickets, weakness produced due to problem related to bones , Short and stunted

### ***2. Disability related to vision:***

**Blind:** A person who cannot see the fingers of hand by both eyes at a distance of 10 feet despite treatment (medicine, surgery and use of glasses), then that person is blind.

**Low Vision:** If any person who cannot distinguish fingers of a hand from a 20 feet distance despite treatments like medicine, surgery and use of glasses then that person has low vision. Low vision can't be corrected fully with glasses, contact lenses, medication or eye surgery.

### ***3. Disability related to hearing:***

**Deaf:** An individual, who cannot hear, speaks incoherently or cannot speak and who has to use sign language for communication is deaf. An individual who cannot even hear sound above 80 decibels is deaf.

**Hard of Hearing:** An individual who can hear only little but cannot speak clearly, can only speak little, who needs to put hearing aid in the ear to listen, is a hard of hearing. An individual who can hear sound between 65 decibels and 80 decibels is a hard of hearing.

### ***4. Disability related to voice and speech:***

Due to difficulty produced in parts related to voice and speech and difficulty in rise and fall of voice to speak, unclear speech, repetition of words and letters is disability related to voice and speech.

### ***5. Intellectual disability:***

An individual having difficulty in carrying out activities relative to age or environment due to absence of intellectual development before age of 18 years is intellectual disability.

### ***6. Mental illness:***

An individual having difficulty in living daily life due to mental health illness or weakness.

Note: The above standard for different types of disabilities have been described in “Definition and Classification of Disability, 2006” of Nepal Government.

## **Classification of disability**

The Nepal Government has classified disability on the basis of severity of disability. They are listed as follows

### ***1. Complete disability:***

Total disability is a condition where there is difficulty in carrying out daily activities even with the continuous assistance of others. Persons with complete disability have disability id card of red color.

### ***2. Severe disability:***

The condition of having to continuously take other people's assistance in order to carry out individual daily activities and to take part in social activities is severe disability. Persons with severe disability have blue colored disability ID card.

### ***3. Moderate disability:***

The condition of being able to perform daily activities by self with or without taking others' support, if the physical facilities are available, the physical environment is removed and there are opportunities of training and education is called Moderate disability. Persons with moderate disability have yellow colored disability ID card.

### ***4. Mild disability:***

The situation where taking part in regular daily activities and social activities by self is possible if there is no social and environmental obstacle is mild disability. Persons with mild disability have white colored disability ID card.

### Facts about Disability

- More than 1 billion persons in the world have some form of disability.
- This corresponds to about 15% of the world's population.
- 80% of them reside in developing countries.
- According to National Census 2011, the disability prevalence rate is 1.94%.
- People with disabilities are largest minority group.

### Barriers



Fig: A person in a wheelchair in front of a set of stairs.

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Even though People with disabilities are major chunk of total population in Nepal, they are not considered in the mainstream of the development. They have still been marginalized in the community. They don't have physical and programmatic access in the basic services and facilities. The public buildings, schools, governmental offices, private organizations, commercial buildings, cinema halls, public toilets, libraries, restaurant, public vehicles are not disabled friendly. As a result, PWDs lack access on education, employment, transportation, information, communication, social participation. They are not actively and full included in the family, society. The main reason for this exclusion is the barriers present in every sector of the society.

Barriers can be attitudinal, physical, communication, legal and social.

### ***1. Attitudinal Barrier***

If we really analyze the problem down to its root, the main constraining factor for the exclusion of PWDs is attitudinal barrier. The misconceptions and beliefs of the society addressing attitudinal barriers are:

- Disability is a personal tragedy, sadness that needs our pity.
- The lives of people with disabilities are totally different than the lives of people without disabilities.
- Disability is an illness that needs to be cured.
- People with disabilities are dependent and always need help.
- People with disabilities are special and should be treated differently.
- People with disabilities are brave, courageous and inspirational for living with their disability.
- People with disabilities are less intelligent than people without disabilities.
- People with disabilities cannot lead a full and productive life therefore they are burden to the family, society and county.
- People with disabilities are object of charity.



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- People with disabilities are funny; they are the subject for joking.
- People with disabilities (PWDs) get special gift so they get success easily.
- A disability must be visible to be real. Only “blind, deaf and wheel-chair users” are disabled.
- Physical disability is an indicator of mental disability. Person using wheelchair can’t think, understand.
- People with disabilities can only work at special jobs made just for them.
- You have to speak loudly to most PWDs because they might have difficulty talking and listening. Person who can’t see also can’t hear.
- People with disabilities don't want to be around persons who don’t have disabilities.
- People who are blind acquire a "sixth sense.”
- Person using wheelchair are paralyzed, they can’t even move, walk.
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- Person using wheelchair are paralyzed, they can't even move, walk.

### ***2. Physical Barriers***

The barriers related to physical environment such as buildings, public toilets, customer care Centre, roadways, pathways, transportation, parking areas etc. The physical barriers are narrow doors, stairs and escalators in the building, lack of curb cuts in sidewalk and roadways, scattered physical obstacles in footpaths, lack of use of tactile in pathways, inaccessible transportation, inaccessible ATMs etc.

### ***3. Communication Barriers***

- Lack of adequate written information and visual signage.
- Inaccessible website.
- Lack of information in audio and Braille format.
- Lack of appropriate format of information for people with intellectual disabilities.
- Lack of closed captioning.
- Lack of provision of sign language interpreters.

### ***4. Social Barriers***

Many myths, misconceptions and stereotypes about disability have been rooted in the society. The combination of attitudinal, physical and communication barriers has resulted less interaction, coordination between people with and without disabilities. PWDs lack participation on community gatherings, informal meetings, social programs. As result, these two communities are segregated in the society. People without disabilities are less concerned and less aware about disability and its related issues. They feel awkward and discomfort to interact with PWDs. People who have never had contact with a person with a disability may have numerous questions, like how to talk, interact. They feel uneasy being around a person with a disability.

### 5. *Legal Barriers*

Some disability related laws are already existing but it lacks proper implementation and monitoring of such laws. Also, no any integrated laws on disability has been formulated and the disability issues hasn't been included in other existing laws. There are no any leaders with disabilities in high level decision making position, which has directly affected on the formulation of disability related policy and laws.

### UNCRPD

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It is an international disability treaty that promotes, protects and ensures the dignity and human rights for all people with disabilities. More than 150 countries and regional integration organizations have signed the Convention, and over 130 have ratified it. Nepal has also ratified it. The main key areas in CRPD include awareness-raising about disability, accessibility, right to life, equal recognition before the law, access to justice, liberty and security of person, freedom of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, or punishment, freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse, living independently and being included in the community, personal mobility, education, health, work and employment, participation in political and public life, participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport Statistics and data collection.

### National Disability Laws

- Disabilities Protection and Welfare Act (अपाङ्ग संरक्षण तथा कल्याण ऐन २०३९)
- Definition Classification of Disability 2006 (अपाङ्गताको परिभाषा तथा वर्गीकरण २०६३)
- Disabled Protection and Welfare Rules 2051 (अपाङ्ग संरक्षण तथा कल्याण नियमावली २०५१)
- National Policy and Plan of Action Disability (अपाङ्गता सम्बन्धी राष्ट्रिय

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नीति तथा कार्य योजना २०६३)

- Special Education Policy 2053 (विशेष शिक्षा नीति २०५३)
- Disability ID card Distribution Guidelines of Government (अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्तिहरूको परिचयपत्र वितरण निर्देशिका)
- Directive for accessible physical infrastructure and communication services for PWDs 2069 (अपाङ्गता भएका व्यक्तिहरूको परिचयपत्र वितरण निर्देशिका)

### Accessibility



Fig: Picture of accessible bathroom for people with disabilities

Accessibility refers to the design of products, devices, services, or environments that can be used by person with disability as effectively as it can be used by person without disability. Physical accessibility refers to making the physical environment such as buildings, public toilets, customer care center,

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roadways, pathways transportation, parking areas etc. accessible to persons with disabilities. Some examples of physical accessibility include ramps to complement stairs in buildings, elevator complement to escalator, wide and easy access of parking areas with disability symbol, doors either automatic, or able to be opened by pulling with average force, audio announcement systems on lifts with Braille for person who is blind, visual and written information and signage in public places to facilitate access by person who is deaf, building curb cuts and use of tactile on pavement and sidewalks, for easy mobility of person using wheelchair and blind. ICT accessibility refers to making electronic infrastructure, communication services and information easily accessible to person with disabilities. It includes accessibility of electronic infrastructure, communication and telecommunication services, websites, software, hardware. Some examples of ICT accessibility are simply designed website with minimal use of graphics so that it can be easily used by person who is blind, provision of closed captioning in TV networks so that person who is deaf can also enjoy TV programs.

### Reasonable accommodation

According to the definition in Article 2 of the UNCRPD, “**Reasonable accommodation**” means “necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments not imposing a disproportionate or undue burden, where needed in a particular case, to ensure to persons with disabilities the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

**Reasonable accommodation** is modifications or adjustments to the environment that enable a person with a disability to enjoy the same benefits, services and privileges with dignity and freedom.

**Reasonable accommodation** could mean different things in different contexts. For instance, it could mean the provision of large print materials for person with low vision, modifying the height of desk for the easy use of computer by leg for person who don't have hands, provision of sign language interpreter for person who has hearing impaired, removing the obstacles in the pathways inside office building so that employer who is blind can move easily in the building, the verbal or audio description of the videos, photos, graphics for the person who is blind, provision of writer to blind

students for appearing exams.



Fig: Example of Accomodation: Ms. Sushila Dhakal, government employee at Tax office doing her job. Her computer table is of lower height than her chair.

## Universal Design

The article 2 of the UNCRPD describes universal design as “Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programs and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design”

Universal Design is the process of creating products that are usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities, operating within the widest possible range of situations. This is about making things accessible to all people (whether they have a disability or not). The concept of Universal Design recognizes the diversity of the human population and the fact that human needs and abilities are constantly changing. Rather than focusing on users with specific disabilities, universal design creates solutions that will



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work for everyone, regardless of age, mobility, visual, auditory or mental ability. Some examples of universal design are Curb ramps because they are effective not only for wheelchairs, but also for mothers with strollers and people carrying luggage and bicycles users, , automatic sliding doors are useful not only people using wheelchairs, but are also equally useful for people without limbs, people using walkers, person carrying baby strollers, luggage. Similarly closed captioning on TV networks will not only be beneficial for people who can't hear but also to everybody on noisy areas like airport, customer care center etc.w .Clear directional signs that have large and high contrast print are useful for low vision as well people can recognize it from far.

Ensuring that the environment, products and services conform to universal design may reduce the number of reasonable accommodations that need to be made; however, reasonable accommodations may still be required for persons with specific disabilities.



Fig: Automatic Doors are excellent example of Universal Design Principle as this is easy to use for people with and without disabilities.

### Inclusion

Inclusion of people with disabilities is the integrated concept of access, accommodation and universal design. The concept behind the inclusion is that all people should freely, openly and actively included in the society. Inclusion is the elimination of all kind of barriers, restrictions and limitations. It emphasis the access of all kind of people with dignity. While it may not always be possible to achieve complete accessibility, a truly inclusive environment continuously strives to increase its level of accessibility.

### Disability Related language

#### Persons First Language

People-first language is a type of linguistic prescription in English, aiming to avoid perceived and subconscious dehumanization when discussing people with disabilities, as such forming an aspect of disability etiquette.

The basic idea is to impose a sentence structure that names the person first and the condition second, for example “people with disabilities” rather than “disabled people” or “disabled”, in order to emphasize that “they are people first”. Because English syntax normally places adjectives before nouns, it becomes necessary to insert relative clauses, replacing, e.g., “asthmatic person” with “a person who has asthma.” Furthermore, the use of to be is deprecated in favor of using to have.

The speaker is thus expected to internalize the idea of a disability as a secondary attribute, not a characteristic of a person’s identity. Critics of this rationale point out that separating the “person” from the “trait” implies that the trait is inherently bad or “less than”, and thus dehumanizes people with disabilities.

The term people-first language first appeared in 1988 as recommended by advocacy groups in the United States.



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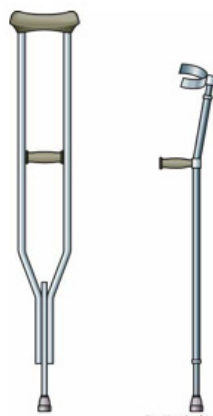
	<i>What you should not say</i>	<i>What you should say</i>
1	handicapped, disabled, abnormal	person with disability
2	normal, healthy	person without disability
3	crippled, lame, quadriplegic	person with physical disability
4	blind	person who is blind
5	deaf, mute	person who is deaf
6	dumb, mute, tongue tied	person who is unable to speak
7	Wheelchair bound	person using wheelchair
8	mentally retarded, retarded, slow, idiot	person with intellectual disability
9	crazy, insane, psycho, mentally ill	person diagnosed with a mental health condition

### अपाङ्गता सम्बन्धी मर्यादित शब्दावली

अपमानजनक ❌	मर्यादित ✅
लुलो, कुँजो, लङ्गडो, खोरण्डो, बाउन्नवीर, वामपुङ्के, डुँडो	शारीरिक अपाङ्गता
लठेब्रो, गोज्याङ्ग्रो	बौद्धिक अपाङ्गता
खुँडे	वाक् अपाङ्गता
कानो, अन्धो	दृष्टिविहीन
बहिरो, वक्क लाटो	बहिरा अपाङ्गता
हकला	भकभके
अन्धोलाटो	श्रवण-दृष्टिविहीन

Picture: Examples of People First Language

## Adaptive equipment



pictures from Left to Right (top): Wheelchair, Magnifying Glass, Crutches  
(bottom): Hearing Aid, White Cane

## Adaptive Design, Structures, Systems

### *Jaws*

JAWS is a computer screen reader that allows blind and visually impaired users to read the screen with a text-to-speech. This software reads everything that a user types from the keyboard and also everything that is displayed on the screen.

With the help of this software, people who can't see can easily use computer programs and internet as other users without disability.

### *Braille*

It is a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material. Braille is not a language. Rather, it is a code by which languages such as

English or Nepali may be written and read.

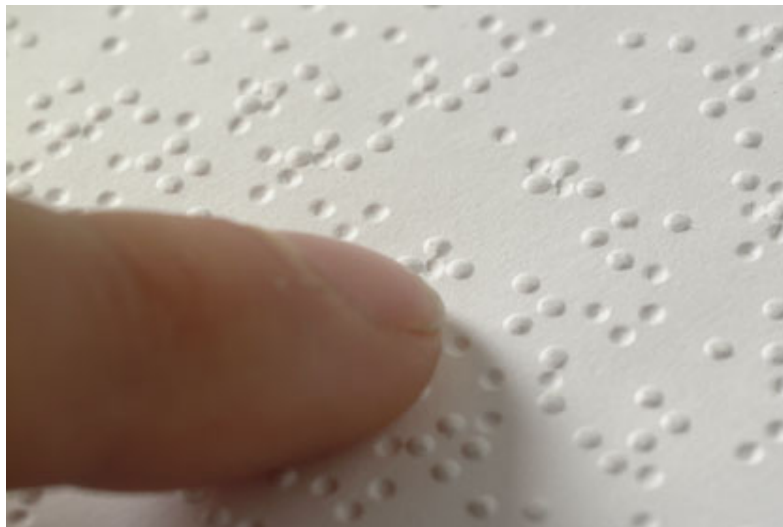


Fig: Close up Picture of Braille

### ***Large Print***

**Large-print** (*also large-type or large-font*) refers to the formatting of a book or other text document in which the typeface (or font), and sometimes the medium, are considerably larger than usual, to accommodate people who have poor vision.

### ***Closed Captioning***

Closed captioning (or abbreviated: CC) is the process of displaying text on a television, video screen, or other medium like YouTube. The text is scrolled across the bottom of the screen so that viewers can read what's being said on the video.



Fig: Closed Captioning used in Nepali TV program Tough Talk

### *Sign Language*

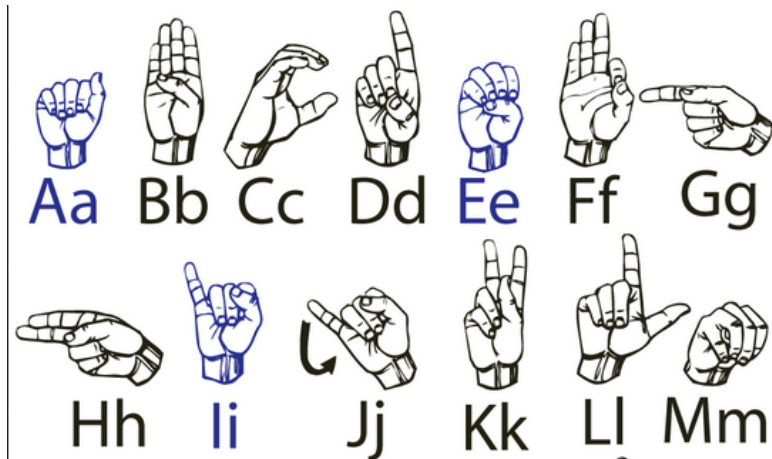


Fig: English Alphabets in Sign Language System

A sign language (also signed language or simply signing) is a language which uses manual communication and body language to convey meaning, as opposed to acoustically conveyed sound patterns. This can involve simultaneously combining hand shapes, orientation and movement of the hands, arms or body, and facial expressions to fluidly express a speaker's thoughts.

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Wherever communities of deaf people exist, sign languages have been developed. Signing is not only used by the deaf, it is also used by people who can hear, but cannot physically speak. While they use space for grammar in a way that spoken languages do not, sign languages show the same linguistic properties and use the same language faculty as do spoken languages.[1][2] Hundreds of sign languages are in use around the world and are at the cores of local deaf cultures. Some sign languages have obtained some form of legal recognition, while others have no status at all.

A common misconception is that all sign languages are the same worldwide or that sign language is international. Aside from the pidgin International Sign, each country generally has its own, native sign language, and some have more than one, though sign languages may share similarities to each other, whether in the same country or another one.

### ***Tactile***



Figure: Newly installed tactile in footpath at Singhadurbar

Tactile paving is a system of textured ground surface indicators found on many footpaths, stairs and train station platforms to assist pedestrians who are blind or visually impaired. Tactile warnings provide a distinctive surface pattern detectable by long cane or underfoot which are used to alert people with visual impairments of their approach to streets and hazardous drop-offs.

## ***Curb cut***

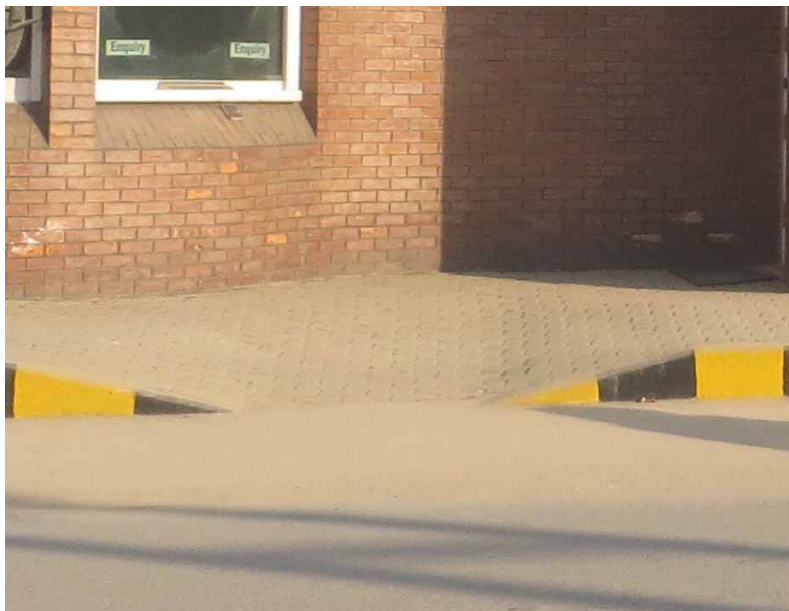


Figure: Curb Cut Installed infront of American Center in Lazimpat

A curb cut is a solid (usually concrete) ramp graded down from the top surface of a sidewalk to the surface of an adjoining street. Curb cuts placed at street intersections allow someone in a wheelchair, tricycle etc., to move onto or off a sidewalk without difficulty. A pedestrian using a walker or cane, pushing a stroller, pushing or pulling a cart or walking next to a bicycle also benefits from a curb cut.

## **Disability Etiquette**

- Treat people with disabilities with dignity and respect
- If you would like to help someone with a disability, ask if he or she needs it before you act,
- Avoid personal questions.
- Don't make assumptions.
- When talking with someone who has a disability, speak directly to

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him or her, rather than through a companion or attendant.

- Don't underestimate or overestimate the potential of a person with a disability.
- Don't lean or hang on someone's wheelchair. Wheelchairs are an extension of personal space.
- When you offer to assist someone with a vision impairment, allow the person to take your arm.
- Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions, such as "See you later" or "I've got to run", that seem to relate to the person's disability.
- When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, place yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level to spare both of you a stiff neck.
- When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you.
- When directing a person with a visual impairment, use specifics such as "left a hundred feet" or "right two yards"
- When planning events involving persons with disabilities, consider their needs ahead of time. If barrier exists, let them know about it prior to the event.

## International Symbols



International  
Symbol of Access



Sign Language  
Interpreter



Closed Captioning



Assistive  
Listening



Access for person  
who is visually  
impaired

## Concluding:

- Disability is not a disease it is just a condition. People with a disability do not always experience pain due to their disability. They sometimes get sick same as person without disability.
- Persons with disabilities generally don't want pity and charity, just equal rights and access to opportunities.
- Adjusting to a disability is just an adaptation to lifestyle, not bravery and courage.
- People with disabilities can play, read, write, eat, go to school, get married, work, and have families, laugh, cry, angry, and dream like everyone else. Their lives are not totally different than people with disabilities.
- All of us may have difficulty doing certain things. People with a disability may require help on occasion; however disability does not mean dependency. What makes people with disabilities dependent on others is not their disability but the environmental barriers present in



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our society.

- A person's vision, or lack of vision, does not affect his or her hearing. However, people who have sight impairments may depend more on their hearing and be more used to sounds than someone without a sight impairment.
- People with disabilities are not asking for extra privilege they just want to be treated with same dignity and respect as people without disabilities do.
- Labelling people with a disability as "special" does not convey equality. People with disabilities don't need special privilege but equal access and opportunities.
- A person without a disability is not defined as confined to their car. In the same way People with a disability are not 'confined' or bounded to their wheelchair. A wheelchair, like an automobile, is a form of mobility that contributes to a person's independence.
- People with disabilities are not different people, In fact we all are people with differences.
- Differences in forms of body feature and a different way of thinking and learning is not totally different and special, but it is just a diversity.
- The only special needs that people with disabilities have is to be loved and accepted as the way they are.

# **Understanding Disability A Basic Guide to Disability Basics**

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